

yellow-breasted chat *Icteria virens*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Icteriidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The yellow-breasted chat averages seven inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). It has yellow feathers on the throat and breast. The head, back and tail feathers are green-brown. There is a patch of white feathers between the front of the eye and the back edge of the beak.

BEHAVIORS

The yellow-breasted chat is a common migrant and summer resident in southern Illinois decreasing northward. It lives in thickets, edges and brushy areas. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. Eggs are produced from May through July. This bird nests in thickets and brushy areas, at ground level or a few feet above the ground. The nest is composed of leaves, vines, grasses and other plant materials. Three to five, white eggs with red-brown markings are deposited by the female, and she alone incubates them for the 11-day incubation period. The yellow-breasted chat's nest is often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird. The cowbird deposits an egg that the chat will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migration starts in September. The chat winters from the southern United States to Panama. It eats insects. Its song includes whistles, harsh notes and "caws" with long pauses between sounds. It often sings at night.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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